

Chapter 3

Background and Planning Policy History

3. Background and Planning Policy History

Planning policies regarding the Stevens Creek Basin date back to the 1961 Comprehensive Plan. Since the 1961 Comprehensive Plan, a number of plans and studies have identified policies related to the future of the Stevens Creek Basin. The following synopsis briefly outlines the policies contained in these Comprehensive Plans, and the basis regarding the formulation of growth and development goals in the Stevens Creek Basin.

A. 1961 Comprehensive Plan

The 1961 Comprehensive Plan was the first policy document that recommended land use guidelines for the Stevens Creek Basin. In general, the 1961 Plan emphasized balanced development of the City centered around Lincoln's downtown. The emphasis of these policies was based upon the cost efficient provision of public infrastructure and efficient movement of traffic flow throughout the City.

The Plan indicated that the decision was not whether to plan for eventual urbanization in the Stevens Creek Basin and servicing the area with public infrastructure, but when to provide full urban services in the Basin.

The provision of a sanitary sewer system was identified as the most significant public infrastructure system to develop in the Basin. The Plan indicated that providing a sanitary sewer system within the Stevens Creek Basin was not needed during the planning period (20 years) covered by the 1961 Comprehensive Plan. The Plan acknowledged that installing a sanitary sewer system for the Stevens Creek Basin would postpone urbanization of the Basin until a balanced population density and urban pattern centered around the downtown core population distribution was achieved. A large portion of the Stevens Creek Basin was designated as "agricultural" on the 1961 Plan's future land use map.

B. 1977 Comprehensive Plan

In general, the 1977 Comprehensive Plan reinforced the policy of concentric and contiguous growth. The 1977 Plan noted that extending development in an easterly direction, prior to achieving the growth objectives to the west, south, and north, would result in negative impacts concerning: (1) the

quality of life for Lincoln residents, and (2) the investment of public funds in infrastructure development. Additional impacts envisioned from continued easterly growth included the weakening of the downtown core as a commercial activity center, and the emergence of the Gateway commercial area as the new center for Lincoln, and the increase travel along east-west routes throughout Lincoln. The Plan also asserted that the development of the Stevens Creek Basin would result in the large expenditures of public funds for the provision of public infrastructure.

To maintain land in the Stevens Creek Basin as primarily agricultural in use appeared logical from a fiscal, developmental, and land use conservation viewpoint. A large portion of the Stevens Creek Basin, primarily the west side of Stevens Creek, was identified as an “urban reserve” on the 1977 future land use map, indicating limited acreage residential development with the objective of reducing urban sprawl. In essence an “urban reserve” refers to agricultural land which may, in the future, come under pressure of urbanization. These lands would be held as agricultural preserves, thereby limiting the location of rural non-farm development or any other land uses which disrupt potentials for future urbanization.

The policy known as the “Stevens Creek Ridge Policy” was also developed at this time. This policy was designed reinforce the City’s gravity flow sanitary sewer policy by discouraging the pumping of sewerage across the ridges that form the natural boundaries between basins.

During 1979, amendments to the City’s Zoning Ordinance also replaced the one (1) acre lot in agriculture areas with a twenty (20) acre lot minimum. This change in the zoning regulations was one of the land use tools used to enforce the “urban reserve” land use policy identified in the 1977 Plan.

C. 1985 Comprehensive Plan

Overall, the 1985 Comprehensive Plan encouraged growth to the north, west, and south. This pattern was supported by the construction of public infrastructure serving these areas. Again, the emphasis of the Plan was a concentric urban pattern around downtown Lincoln. Included in the Plan were policies to retain agricultural uses in the Stevens Creek Basin until sufficient urban growth had been achieved in the north, south, and west. The Plan recognized there was available land to the north, south and west

for future development, which were designated as urban reserves. Nearly the entire Stevens Creek Basin was designated as “agricultural” on the 1985 Plan’s future land use map.

D. 1994 Comprehensive Plan

The 1994 Comprehensive Plan identified the Stevens Creek Basin as a Phase IV planning area. A Phase IV planning area designation refers to the balance of land located in the City of Lincoln’s extraterritorial jurisdiction (outside the City limits but within the City’s 3-mile planning and zoning jurisdiction) which is to remain as an urban reserve and is not anticipated to have urban services during the planning period.

The majority of the west side of the Stevens Creek Basin and portions of the east side of the Stevens Creek Basin are within the 3-mile jurisdiction designated as Phase IV urban reserve. A large portion of the east side of the Stevens Creek Basin was located outside of the 3-mile jurisdiction and was not identified as part of the City’s growth area in the near term.

In general, the policy of the 1994 Plan was to maintain contiguous urban growth. As the community grows, public infrastructure and facilities including roads, water, sewer, parks, schools, and utilities would be developed concurrently with new growth. Again, most of the land in the Stevens Creek Basin was designated as “agricultural” on the Plan’s future land use map.

E. 1996 Directional Growth Analysis Report

The 1996 Directional Growth Analysis Report documented the land use planning implications of alternative growth scenarios for the City of Lincoln. The analysis examined a range of planning issues relating to the urbanization of areas immediately adjacent to the City’s future service limits. The report evaluated contiguous undeveloped areas by considering a range of developmental factors including population base assumptions, the life expectancy of the Comprehensive Plan, transportation, commercial, industrial, major capital facility needs and costs, urban form, environmental constraints, and market considerations. The areas considered for this analysis included directional growth areas to the north,

east, south, and southwest. The recommendations from the report include:

1. Continue the 90%/10% population ratio between Lincoln and Lancaster County.
2. Accept two land use options for further evaluation:
 - < East at 70% and North at 30% (Which included Stevens Creek Basin)
 - < South at 35%, Southwest at 35% and North at 30%
3. Commit to construction of Salt Valley Relief Sewer.
4. Preserve Lincoln's growth potential by discouraging acreage development in the City's 3-mile jurisdiction.
5. Incorporate County Plan Task Force reports into the Comprehensive Plan.

F. South and East Beltway Study

A complete circumferential roadway system has been discussed in Lincoln for more than 35 years, dating back to the 1961 Comprehensive Plan.

The 1966 "Lincoln Metropolitan Area Transportation Study" indicated an "East Side Freeway" and a "U.S. 77 West Bypass" in the Major Street Plan. The 1971 "Corridor Study for the U.S. 77 South Freeway: West and East Bypasses of Lincoln" was prepared under the direction of the Nebraska Department of Roads to study the most desirable alternative corridor locations for the East and West Bypasses around Lincoln. Since 1972, the focus of the proposed Lincoln roadway system has been toward developing the U.S. 77 West By-Pass corridor. Most of the projects for the West Bypass have been completed or have funding identified for their completion.

In recent years the South and East Beltways received much attention, and the development of the system would complete a looped road network system around Lincoln. The purpose of the beltway system is to move "through traffic" around congested urban areas, reduce delays and improve traffic flow on the existing urban street system. An Alternative Corridor Evaluation and Draft Environmental Impact Study that is currently under review by Federal authorities is expected to be made available for review by spring of 2001. Participants in the process have included the City of Lincoln, Lancaster County, the Nebraska Department of Roads, the Federal

Highway Administration, other regulatory agencies, and the residents of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Three alternative corridors were identified for the East Beltway and one corridor has been identified for the South Beltway. The three East Beltway corridors travel through the Stevens Creek Basin. The Beltway Study includes the following options:

- Build no major new roads; or
- Build only on section line roads; or
- Build a new By-Pass, either South, or East, or both.

G. LPSNRD Comprehensive Flood Management Plan

In 1997, the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (LPSNRD) completed a Comprehensive Flood Management Plan for the Stevens Creek watershed. The central concept of the Plan is the preservation of open space along Stevens Creek to protect the natural stream corridor for the purpose of improving water quality, reducing flood damage and erosion, and to preserve open space for the benefit of the public.

The Plan includes a number of separate, but closely related components to achieve this goal including the following:

9. An integrated watershed management program for the basin.
10. Development of an integrated watershed computer model for the basin.
11. The acquisition of land rights and easements along the Stevens Creek corridor for open space and trail development along the Stevens Creek waterway between the two existing trails.
12. The construction of farm ponds for water detention.
13. The construction of supplemental box culvert in the vicinity of 80th Street and Fletcher Road.
14. Erosion control and streambank stabilization between the Murdock Trail and Highway 6.
15. Land treatment, including terrace development in the eastern bank of the Stevens Creek basin.
16. Recreational options.
17. Social, cultural, and environmental issues, and
18. And an economic analysis of the watershed plan components.

EXISTING FEATURES

- Residential Structures
- Public Utilities
- Commercial/Industrial
- Super Fund Sites
- Major Power Lines
- Trails
- Golf Courses
- Major Pipelines
- 100 Year Flood
- Floodway
- 500 Year Flood
- Village 1 Mile Limits
- Parks
- Natural Areas
- Stations
- State Road/Lane
- Lanes
- Future Dams
- Existing Streets
- Trans
- Residential Areas
- Public Utilities
- Railroads
- Current/Industrial
- Other Contaminated
- NRHP Sites
- NRHP eligible
- Paved/Unpaved

LINCOLN

EC-1

EM-1

EF-1

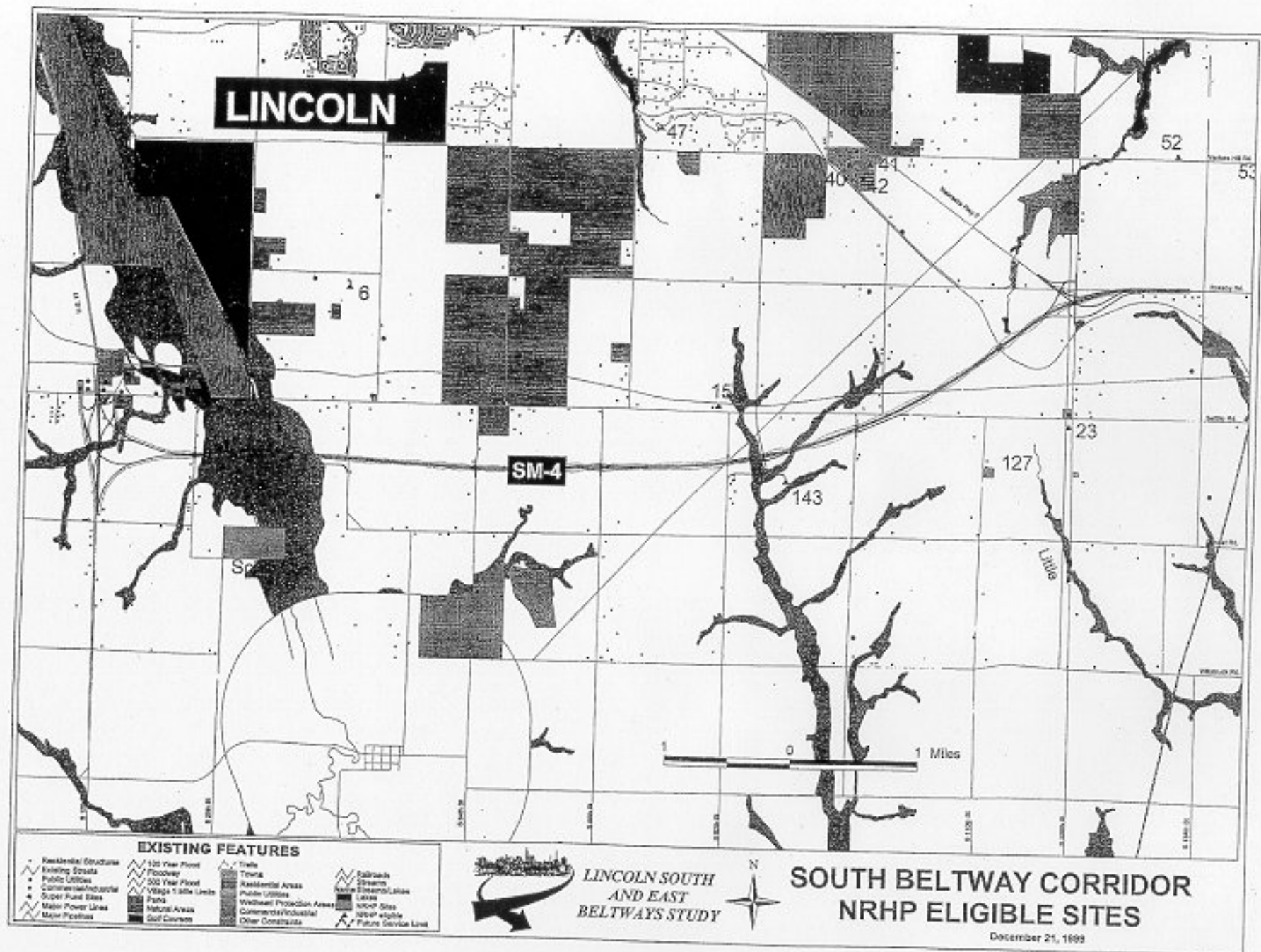
EAST BELTWAY CORRIDOR NRHP ELIGIBLE SITES



LINCOLN SOUTH
AND EAST
BELTWAYS STUDY



December 21, 1988



The LPSNRD Plan was adopted in 1998 and was subsequently amended as a component of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan.

H. 1999 Comprehensive Plan Amendment

During the 1999 Comprehensive Plan Annual Review process, there was considerable public discussion concerning the future of the Stevens Creek Basin. As an outcome of this discussion, the Lincoln City Council and Lancaster County Board amended the 1994 Comprehensive Plan by adopting the following language:

“Develop a subarea plan for the Stevens Creek drainage basin which will address the environmental, land use, transportation, utility, service and other development issues regarding the future urban and rural development in the basin.”

This Comprehensive Plan directive formed the basis for the Stevens Creek Basin Initiative (SCBI) planning process documented in this summary report.